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Big issues for WA

Policy options for challenges ahead

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Foreword

Dawn Freshwater



Western Australia is blessed with extraordinary advantages that have helped to make it a safe, prosperous society. But the challenges are there, undeniably. *Big Issues for Western Australia* is concerned with these challenges.

In WA we have much to do to ensure greater equity and fairness, and on pushing harder to make sure that opportunity structures work for all. We have big agendas for environmental stewardship, sustainable agriculture, regional development, healthy lives and communities that are at ease with themselves. We also have the great privilege to build deep and mutually respectful relationships with our Indian Ocean neighbours.

In all of these areas the WA Government has its priorities and UWA is engaging with government to make best use of our research insights to support delivery against those areas. UWA is well positioned to engage not just with WA's Government but with communities, non-profits and industry

to arrive at better informed solutions. Both UWA and the WA Government have important roles to play in joining up the hidden wiring between knowledge, policy and practice – though not all of the issues highlighted here are for government to solve. We have reflected on our own role as a partner with others in our recent Strategic Plan 2020-25.

Articulating what the essential agenda is today, and will become in the next decade, is a good place to start – as we have done in this publication. Specifying the smartest way to follow up on that agenda is what comes next. It is a harder task, and an important one for UWA.

Introductory comments



Shamit Saggar

A simple idea sits behind *Big Issues for Western Australia*. It is that UWA's expertise and leadership in the knowledge industry should not sit in isolation, and instead should be part of a shared understanding of the issues and challenges that lie ahead. The point of our expertise is to ensure that better informed decisions can be made to improve people's lives.

We have gathered thoughts and wisdom on a wide range of issues, and we have looked to key figures for their perspectives and practical suggestions. The short essays presented here are about setting priorities, not just for today but for 10 to 15 years ahead. The contributing team individually and collectively have articulated that sitting back and letting events unfold is not an option. In some cases there is a compelling need for a fresh start or a timely pivot in what we in WA are trying to achieve and how to do so.

There are four main themes that flow through BIWA. First, the vast geographical spread of WA creates numerous policy challenges in terms of how to organise resources and efforts. This fact underscores so much of what can be achieved in health, education and economic development. There are examples of good practice that allow better reallocation of resources but WA must necessarily be in the business of looking outwards and learning how other, highly dispersed places have responded.

We should be aiming to collate cutting-edge expertise in this vital area and make it easy to use in designing, delivering and evaluating current and future public policies. WA is a unique place to live and to govern wisely. But it is also a place that doesn't have all the solutions that would best fit its needs.

Secondly, building on an already successful economy raises lots of ideas for 'doing things better' as well as some for 'doing better things'. The long list of supply-side measures in improved

infrastructure and raising human capital are compelling, for sure, but behind these sit tricky choices to help avoid economic boom and bust cycles.

Few energy and resource-rich places have managed to solve this puzzle, and again it is a reason for looking closely at what has worked, where and why. Better informed public policy is vital here in WA for this reason alone.

Thirdly, putting especially hard policy choices into arms-length arrangements makes sense. The risks of not doing so are budgetary short-termism and political distractions. Investing for a rainy day has a lot of appeal but the challenge is to make these commitments hard to unpick.

One approach might be to consult experts in a structured and ongoing way to establish four of five areas that could most benefit from a 10 to 15-year horizon to achieve results. The next stage would be to link say three per cent of WA's annual \$30bn budget to those objectives with timely updates on progress informing and driving another discretionary two per cent spend to boost anticipated or actual gains.

This kind of innovation in public policy would draw on practice often found

in the private sector and elsewhere. The model could work in many areas including childhood development, domestic violence, infrastructure to support wellbeing, and shaping new overseas trade relations.

Finally, the status of WA's Indigenous people stands out, as it has for so long. The lack of progress is arguably one of the biggest reputational challenges facing the country. It is frequently remarked on by visitors and by WA's neighbours in the Indian Ocean region. It is arguably a stain not just on the past but also on our future credibility as equals and partners across the Indian Ocean region. Australia has clear opportunities to build positive relations across the region, pulling together with neighbours and equals to foster a shared responsibility for the future Indian Ocean. It must not be impeded in its claim to be an 'honest broker'.

Answers to this particular challenge are not in short supply. The question is knowing which work, and making better use of federal and state policy levers so as to concentrate on the biggest harms in suicide rates, in incarceration, in better health, and so forth. Early prevention is the key so, again, there is a strong case to operate a long-term strategy that ensures future, evidence-

based gains are not jeopardised by daily politics.

We hope the audience for BIWA will be better informed across a range of issues having read, absorbed and discussed the contributions. We also trust they will be persuaded of the case for evidence-based public policy, and with this, UWA's expertise and know-how.

Ten things to do



Colin Barnett

‘Ten Things to Do’ is simply my personal list of what matters for the future prosperity and success of Western Australia over the next 30 years. The list is in no particular order and may not be what many people believe to be the most important. It reflects my sense of what we should be paying attention to, and develop fresh ways of finding solutions.

1. Population

Only eight countries in the world have a larger geographic area than Western Australia. Yet the state has just 2.6 million people with around 75 per cent living in the Perth metropolitan area. The northern half of the state has only

around 100,000 residents. A growing and more spread out population matters for both economic and social development.

2. Broader economic base

The Western Australian economy is successful, though the pattern of growth is volatile with successive cycles of booms and busts. The economy is heavily concentrated in mining and farming. The state is export driven and therefore exposed to the vagaries of world markets.

The usual cry is that ‘we need to diversify’. But we also need to be careful. Some diversification will come naturally with population growth and there is still more to be done around our natural advantages in mining and farming. The big step is to do more with the geo-political advantage of being close to the Indo-Pacific nations with their huge populations and increasing prosperity. Tourism, education, health and science are obvious opportunities.

3. Regional development

There has been no lack of effort in regional development, though the results have been mixed. It is time to

progress beyond a country versus city squabble or a nostalgic wish to wind the clock back. Restricting the ever-growing footprint of Perth might be part of the answer. And concentrating on the 10 or so towns which might achieve a reasonable city status with a distinct identity may prove more successful. For example, Bunbury as a second city for government administration.

4. Training

School and university education are in good shape. The same cannot be said of the training sector. The traditional apprenticeship model is struggling as numbers fall. Yet high-level and new skills are needed in the emerging growth industries. For young people there is a strong case for a more equal opportunity in their post-school education.

5. Ageing

With longer life expectancy, the reality of an ageing population is a major social change that is already upon us. There are widespread implications for health care, housing, transport, town planning and so on. For families there will be issues of the cost and quality of care.

6. Aboriginal people

The wellbeing of Aboriginal people is our most pressing social issue. For such a prosperous country, the conditions experienced by so many of the First Australians is a national disgrace and something on which we will be judged. The facts on education, health, employment, and housing show a similar pattern of disadvantage. The tragic loss of life, with suicide rates being amongst the highest in the world, is the most disturbing fact. Alcohol and drug abuse are major factors in crime and anti-social behaviour, leading to excessive rates of imprisonment.

7. Water

Some 70 per cent of Western Australia is arid desert country. In the more populated south-west, rainfall has declined by 20 per cent in the past 50 years. The desalination of seawater has secured the water supply for the Perth suburbs, but the same cannot be said for the rest of the state. Water supply and quality is perhaps the most significant constraint on the state's economic potential and the amenity of living.

8. Natural environment

Western Australia has 100 national parks, which are in realty state parks. It is an extraordinary legacy to

preserve for future generations with a responsibility to protect biodiversity in both the land and marine environment. The management of the natural environment, along with reducing all forms of pollution, is an ongoing task and one for which community expectations are justifiably high.

9. Governance

With a few exceptions, Australia has enjoyed good government at both the Commonwealth and state level. This cannot be taken for granted in an increasingly volatile political environment. Within our federal system there is growing confusion as to which level of government is responsible for what. Respect for the Constitution, political leaders and public institutions is in need of repair. If there is a further decline, then there is a risk of a less stable Australia.

For Western Australia, it is a case of asserting our economic significance along with our constitutional rights and responsibilities.

10. International standing

With just 11 per cent of the population, Western Australia accounts for around 45 per cent of Australia's exports. Our market is outside of Australia. The state has an international standing which

few other regional economies could hope to achieve. It will take a concerted effort to maintain this status and to use it to our advantage.

Yet our isolation leaves a gap in our sense of identity. Perhaps the identity might come as 'Australia's west coast'. We are also often seen as parochial and we do need to raise public and community standards. Western Australia needs to be bold and to display both pride and confidence.

The Honourable Colin Barnett MLA is the former Premier of Western Australia and former member for Cottesloe.

Policy options for the challenges ahead



Fred Chaney

Indigenous affairs

There are plenty of particular challenges in this policy area, many of which fit under the umbrella of ‘closing the gap’. In these areas, the concern is to end the social and economic disparities of the Indigenous population. Others relate to the long-term relationship between first nation peoples and the rest of us, settling the place of first nations within the nation state. Our options for doing better are pretty clear.

Closing the gap

On the closing the gap issues, the peak national Indigenous organisations sought and obtained the support of

Prime Minister Morrison to achieve an important breakthrough at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting last December. At that meeting all governments agreed to work in partnership with Indigenous people in setting their closing the gap objectives and, even more important, in implementing them.

This commitment was without precedent. In the past, governments have been ready to say they should work with rather than on Indigenous people but most commonly they have done the opposite. Top-down command and control approaches have dominated despite the repeated failure of this approach. It is self-evident that improvements in areas such as health education employment and life expectancy require Indigenous agency. The Indigenous people themselves are the critical actors. Top-down instruction that does not involve the willing and active participation of the Indigenous people themselves in improving their education, employment and health changes nothing.

The first challenge to all Australian governments is to live up to their

promises to work in partnership. If they are able to do that, there’s a real prospect of substantial acceleration in closing those notorious gaps in place of the limited gains over the last decade.

To be effective these partnerships will necessarily be place-based and involve all levels of government as well as Indigenous communities. What is needed is localised place-based development with all governments and their myriad agencies working in concert. This can only be achieved if it is driven by local needs and aspirations. The often stated goals of coordination and cooperation cannot be achieved unless they are driven from the bottom up.

This involves another substantial challenge for governments. The whole structure of government, with its siloed departments and upwards accountability arrangements, demand top-down controls. Funding and accountability systems need to be adjusted if place-based partnerships are to be achieved. The third challenge in this area is for remote communities for whom there is a policy vacuum. What are the policies of the three

levels of government towards remote communities, what future do they have? What is needed is clarity of policy so governments and communities have an understood framework within which to work. The absence of any comprehensive policy has resulted in endless ad-hoc interventions that have brought about increased dysfunction, poverty and despair in those communities.

The relationship, constitutional recognition and the Uluru statement from the heart

Thanks largely to settling native title, the relationship is an active work in progress across the country. Agreement-making between first nation peoples and governments and corporations is now commonplace. In Western Australia, with substantial areas under native title, the Southwest Land Settlement between the state of Western Australia and the Noongar legal entities as well as numerous mining agreements mean that agreement-making is frequent and uncontentious. Recognition of Indigenous peoples as against Indigenous individuals is explicit in these agreements.

The idea of constitutional recognition has been batted around since John

Howard proposed it in his term of government. In response to decades of indecision on the part of governments, Indigenous leaders held consultations around Australia culminating in a meeting at Uluru. What was produced at that meeting discarded all of the contentious issues flowing from recognition proposals to that point. Constitutional conservatives had been worried about the unintended consequences of amendments, about changing the balance between the courts and the parliament, and about introducing the beginnings of a constitutional Bill of Rights. Instead, the Uluru Statement from the Heart put all that aside and asked for:

- the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution
- a Makarrata commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations, and
- truth telling about our history.

These modest requests do not interfere with parliamentary supremacy, and ask for no more than:

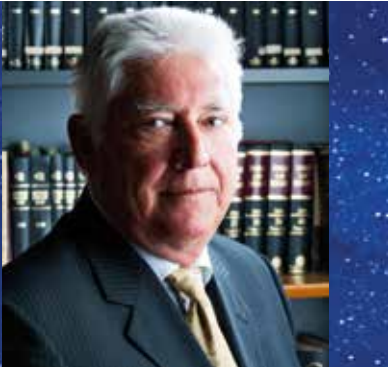
- a right to be heard on matters affecting them (as an antidote to the continuing colonial practice of governments to command and control rather than listening before acting),

- a body to facilitate agreement-making, and
- honesty about our past and present.

Our simple challenge now is to listen and to act on what we have heard. We have found that hard to do in the past but this time perhaps?

Hon Fred Chaney AO is the Vice-President of The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation.

The West Australian Government must step up into foreign affairs



Peter Dowding SC

In April 1985 when Australians saw the television pictures of a diminutive Hu Yaobang standing on a hilltop in the Pilbara of Western Australia with a slightly less diminutive Bob Hawke who was pointing out to the Chinese Communist Party Chairman the edges of the proposed iron ore mine at Channar, few realised what an extraordinarily important moment that was in the economic history of Western Australia.

Under Hawke's direction and assisted with advice from Australian Ambassador to China, Ross Garnaut,

Australia had striven very hard to recognise the Chinese economy as an awaking giant from which Australia stood to gain enormous benefits.

The Washington Post recorded the event as one in which observers could not recall a previous occasion "when a prime minister flew from Canberra all the way across this huge nation to welcome a foreign visitor"!

Channar became the first overseas mining investment by a Chinese company and continues in operation to this day.

Now, of course, the lock step between China and Australia and particularly WA, is a familiar concept to everyone and the rise, and rise, of China's imports of WA's iron ore has underpinned a prosperity of jobs and infrastructure development that was hardly believable in 1985.

But there are some very worrying signs for WA-China relations in political developments at a federal level which the State Government

would be ill advised to ignore.

As examples:

- Earlier this year former Trade Minister Andrew Robb pulled the cork out of the genie bottle accusing the Federal Government of having a "toxic relationship with China".
- Prime Minister Morrison has announced a series of deals and assistance to South Pacific countries to provide a "counterbalance to investment and influence building loans" by China.
- The Federal Government has banned the Chinese electronics giant Huawei from being a supplier to significant Australian infrastructure.
- State Liberal Party members have criticised the McGowan Government for allowing the Huawei to provide the communications network for our (very) modest suburban public transport system.

All this is happening as the Trump administration winds up a positive barrage of rhetoric and action designed to adversely affect China's trading and political position in the world.

It would be foolish to think that China will simply ignore these slights to its reputation and economic interests and that it will be forever business as usual.

So what might a political minnow like the WA Government do to protect one of its most valuable assets, the trade relationship between the iron ore industry and China?

Firstly, it should reflect on the importance of personal intergovernmental contact and take every opportunity to enhance the WA-China relationship.

Secondly, it should use its influence in the new Federal Cabinet through Cormann, Porter, Cash and Wyatt, to lobby the Feds to run a more nuanced line on matters that might affect our trade ties with China.

Thirdly, it might harness those with special ties to China, like Bob Carr, Ross Garnaut and many others, to rebuild and enhance the personal relationships that carry countries through testy times.

And fourthly, from a federal perspective it would be well to remind Prime Minister Morrison that while much of the anti-China rhetoric has



been promoted by the United States, it may no longer be in our national interests to blindly follow the US. After all, New Zealand did not suffer when it incurred the wrath of the US over its refusal to permit nuclear armed ships to enter NZ waters.

Perhaps we should be following suit and declare a greater independence of

thought and action in our relationship with China.

Hon Peter Dowding SC is a former Premier of Western Australia.

Health and wellbeing



Colleen Fisher

The Australian health system is widely considered to be one of the best internationally. With estimated spending of approximately 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) annually, the Australian health system performs above the average of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, including for life expectancy from birth¹ and at age 65². We should not be complacent, however; the sustainability of our health system is a pressing issue and one which should be given priority in policy.

Government and policy makers recognise the important role of

primary care in the health system, but this is insufficient. New and emerging technologies (for example, genomic testing) and new and more expensive drugs (for example, for cancer) will place ever-increasing demands on the health system; inaction on sustainability issues is not an option.

Despite the Australian health system ranking highly internationally, inequality in health outcomes remains entrenched in Australian society. While governments have identified the importance of reducing health disparities among marginalised groups and improving access to healthcare for those living in rural and remote regions, (an issue of vital importance to Western Australia given the vast geographical size and low population in many rural and remote areas), clear policy direction on how this is to be achieved is needed.

A significant health burden in Australia is attributable to chronic disease – the causes of which are largely preventable. In the latest data available, Australia was ranked at number eight in the OECD for overweight and obesity³ – a significant risk factor for a number of chronic diseases. The current

level of spending on prevention in Australia is approximately 1.7 per cent of the overall health budget⁴. Given the burden of chronic disease and opportunities for prevention, this percentage needs to be increased. A rate of five per cent is recommended in Western Australia's Sustainable Health Review⁵ and a commitment for such a rate from all levels of government is warranted.

Through greater investment in evidence-based preventative health measures, not only are there health and wellbeing benefits at the individual and population levels, but such investment can alleviate pressures on the budget; poor health status has significant implications for broader economic activity including labour force participation and productivity.⁶

Ensuring the health and wellbeing of Australians, however, requires much more than addressing an individual's presenting signs and symptoms and addressing individual risk factors. Policy needs to address the social determinants of health. That is, government should be committed to 'health in all policies'. For Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this includes addressing the conditions that lead to the gap in health outcomes, life expectancy and incarceration rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It also includes constitutional reform.

Addressing the social determinants of child health would lead to improved health status and wellbeing across the lifespan. Increasing the Newstart allowance would be a positive step towards addressing poverty and social exclusion. Similarly, addressing homelessness and the drivers and enabling factors of family and domestic violence would lead to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for those affected.

Arguably, one of the most important determinants of health and wellbeing is a safe environment. Changes to climate affect clean air and safe drinking water, food security and secure housing.

Climate change also drives changes in the prevalence and location of many diseases. The health implications of a changing climate have been recognised through global bodies such as the United Nations and nationally through bodies both within and outside the health sector.

The role of government is to lead changes across multiple sectors of society. Providing leadership for the country through a suite of policies to transition to a low carbon economy and address the health and social impacts of climate change is a core, and currently pressing, responsibility of government.

Professor Colleen Fisher is the Head of the UWA School of Population and Global Health.

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Homelessness



Amanda Hunt

A prosperous state like Western Australia has the ability to ensure all people have equal access to a ‘good life’; one with hope, belonging and purpose.

Unfortunately, this isn’t the case today for many of our citizens. In 2016, 9,023¹ Western Australians did not have a place to shelter, a place they had personal control over; where they can maintain privacy and enjoy social relations or have legal title through tenancy rights or ownership. This number includes more than just those who are visible to the public because they are ‘sleeping rough’. It includes people who are couch surfing, in

supported homeless accommodation, other temporary lodgings or severely crowded dwellings.²

The individuals who access UnitingCare West’s (UCW) services at Tranby arrive early in the morning, cold, hungry and anxious. And yet, they are resilient and generous people – keen to connect with any person who accepts them for who and where they are.

Homelessness is complex and multifaceted. However, the label of homelessness places someone firmly as a ‘problematic other’ and implies homogeneity, inferiority and dysfunction.³ The result is that people are shunned from mainstream society and deemed personally at fault for the situation they find themselves in.

Our experience however, is that entrenched social, health and economic disadvantage and growing inequity have created a class of ‘working poor’ – people who are under or unemployed with little savings. One illness or unexpected incident can turn a life around for the worse. And at UCW we know now the experience of being ‘homeless’ can happen to anyone. The

many reasons include escaping family violence, chronic mental health issues or a financial crisis, which could be brought on by unemployment, medical bills or family breakdown. Social isolation and the absence of close, fulfilling and strong relationships can also be key contributors.⁴

There is a perception that homelessness cannot be solved. We believe it can. The WA Alliance to End Homelessness released a 10-year Strategy in April 2018,⁵ which was developed collaboratively with hundreds of stakeholders in WA. This is a guiding document for how we can collectively end homelessness in WA. It includes the voices of people who have or are experiencing homelessness in the design of sustainable solutions.

A key pillar of the EHWA Strategy is creating a movement that will enable positive change – building community capacity through grass roots community action, including a broad campaign to reduce stigmatizing labels.

It is critical to change community perceptions and raise awareness



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Brent Winebrenner

of the reality for people who are labelled – increasing acceptance and appreciation, and tolerance of difference. We need to reject false assumptions that people experiencing homelessness are irreparably broken and to blame, and instead acknowledge that everyone is marvellously capable given opportunities and the right support. We believe that home is more than

just ‘shelter’ and other dimensions including ‘hearth’ (emotional and physical wellbeing) and ‘heart’ (loving and caring social relations)⁶ are just as important.

While more social and affordable housing stock is most definitely critical to ending homelessness, fundamental system shifts are also necessary. Since systems are

essentially made up of individuals, in varying roles, an elegantly simple and achievable start is a change in attitude – from individualism to reaching out to connect with all people in our community.

Amanda is the Chief Executive Officer of UnitingCare West.

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Championing disabled people in WA



Samantha Jenkinson

At People with Disabilities WA, we hear a lot about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from the people using it and through our policy work. However, we know that only about 13 per cent of people with disability in Western Australia will be eligible for the NDIS. When we bring together diverse groups of people with disability and ask them what issues are important to them, they want accessible and affordable housing, a job, to get around and to be included in their local communities.

Access and inclusion has long been recognised in Western Australia as a key part of successive policy

frameworks. This means mainstream services being open, accessible and inclusive to people with disability. The key challenge for the WA State Government is that all of the drive for access and inclusion has come from the state Disability Services Commission. As they withdraw from being the key facilitator of support programs for people with disability and merge with the Department of Communities, the state government needs to decide how much they continue to be involved in facilitating the inclusion and support of people with disabilities and what that involvement looks like.

Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIP) are the current policy tool for inclusive government agencies. There is currently no enforcement of timelines for implementation, or penalties for not implementing a DAIP. Often the items in a DAIP are not about fundamental policy shifts that can improve inclusion. For DAIPs to be taken seriously as tools to embed change in agencies, they must be part of integrated planning and reporting in local government and have higher compliance expectations, as well as the ability to inform major

changes in policy. As the Local Government Act is under reform, the Disability Services Act is changing, and the State Disability Plan is being developed, the time is ripe finally to give some teeth to DAIPs.

Imagine if DAIPs were used to change core policy? All new public housing might be built to a liveable housing gold standard and many in the community would benefit from wider doors and hallways (prams, bikes, and wheelchairs all allowed). The policy changes needed to improve access and inclusion are not unknown. Some are simple, such as ensuring all councils and Main Roads put in footpaths, and written communication is plain English. Others require changing technology with more use of captioning and audio description. Wicked problems like increasing the employment of people with disability require bigger cultural, as well as policy, shifts.

The employment profile of people with disability in the public sector and in executive or senior management positions in the disability and community sector is dismal. However, a big predictor of increased employment



(and disclosure of disability in employment) is having people with disability in leadership positions. This means not just focusing on entry-level employment opportunities for people with disability but actively seeking the innovative people with disability already in employment and ensuring they have pathways and opportunities for leadership development. The Public Sector Commission could set a target not only for overall employment, but

also for people in executive and senior management positions right now. To get real about having inclusive and diverse workforces, that target must be coupled with active affirmative recruitment strategies that focus on finding competent people within diverse populations.

Development of the State Disability Plan using a co-design approach will identify the priorities and actions

the State Government needs to take over the next five years. People with disabilities want ‘nothing about us without us’ in policy change. So, for the best outcomes, embedding co-design and embracing diversity in policy development will be how disabled people are their own champions.

Samantha Jenkinson is the Executive Director at People with Disabilities WA.

Championing women in WA



Simone McGurk MLA

Western Australia is home to a talented, energetic and diverse population. By harnessing and building on these qualities, we can look forward to a stronger future. However, the statistics paint a troubling picture that, when it comes to diversity, Western Australia is being left behind.

With a gender pay gap of 23 per cent in WA, women retiring with half the amount of superannuation compared to men, and unacceptable levels of assault experienced by women, there is much to do. Our state's Family and Domestic Violence Response teams dealt with around 50,000 incidents in the last financial year. Violence against

women and children is a national scourge and costs the Australian community hundreds of millions of dollars annually but, most importantly, it causes lasting trauma – particularly to children.

The representation of women in leadership positions is still too low – as demonstrated by the percentage of female board directors on the ASX 200, female CEOs and COOs, and in our Houses of Parliament. I am proud that the Party I am a member of has more than 40 per cent women in the WA Parliament, and that since taking office, more than 50 per cent of the McGowan government's Board and Committee appointments have been women.

The reason behind the success of our targets is that we have articulated a clear strategy and we measure our progress by setting a target. Ask any leader of a successful organisation and they will tell you: what gets measured, gets done. My challenge to those with the ability to make change is to set a target and hold yourselves to account.

I believe that to secure the broad, lasting and meaningful change needed

to achieve gender equality, we must change the conversation. The impacts and effects of gender inequality are well understood. Instead, we need to focus on finding solutions. We need to explore the role each of us can play in making change.

As Minister for Women's Interests, recognising, understanding and addressing the challenges facing women in our community is central to my role. And those challenges are many, and they spare no sector, industry, group or place in society. Since becoming Minister for Women's Interests just over two years ago, I have been heartened and motivated by the commitment of many organisations, community groups and individuals whose concerted effort is making a difference when it comes to gender equality.

In line with this vision, the McGowan government is proud to be making gender equality a priority. We have announced the development of a 10-year Plan, 'Women's Voices: Building a stronger WA together'. This Plan will be underpinned by the voices of women to guide a long-term State

Government plan for WA to tackle gender inequality.

Since opening consultations in February, we have had more than 700 responses to our online survey and 70 written submissions. In addition to online engagement, community consultations are being conducted around the state to gather women's views and develop our Plan in partnership with the WA community.

We can't do this alone. We want to work in partnership with the community to remove the barriers to women's participation, to eliminate the inequalities that too often place women in vulnerable situations, often as a result of the vital contributions they have made caring for others.

There is no silver bullet or single policy lever that will make gender equality a reality. So I ask you, what is your organisation/sector/community/family doing about this issue? What will be your contribution to building a stronger WA for everyone?

When our communities are more equal, everyone benefits. When workplaces offer flexibility for the benefit of all employees, not just working mothers, they shift the assumption

that balancing work and family responsibilities is the domain of the mother. They send a signal to working dads that they *can* participate more fully in family life.

By encouraging women to work in occupations where they have been traditionally underrepresented, we acknowledge women's capability to work in any field of their choosing. We also invite cultural change within organisations to break stereotypes, and we send a message to men that they too *can* work in other fields. The growth of the care sector is one example where workforce pressures means that we want men and women seriously to consider a career in this sector.

These shifts deliver benefits to our economy and strengthen and enrich our communities for the better. Because in all aspects of life, from schools to the workplace to retirement, at home and in our communities, women deserve equality. So does our state.

Hon Simone McGurk MLA is the Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services and the State Labor Member for Fremantle.

A Human Rights Charter working for Western Australians



Maria Osman

Prime Minister Morrison says if you have a go, you'll get a go! It's a terrific sentiment; some say compassionate and inclusive. However, we know from experience that not everyone who wants to have a go will get the *same* go, a fair go, or *their* go.

This reality is particularly important for state governments, where most of the laws, policies and services affecting our daily lives come from, and because of this, the challenge for Western Australia is to ensure we have a social and legal framework that works for everyone.

The great policy challenge for WA is to enact a Human Rights Charter that will set out, in law, the basic standards of rights, freedoms, equality and respect for everyone in our great state.

We must rethink our laws to ensure they respond to continuing Indigenous disadvantage, to increasing homelessness, to provide basic protection to asylum seekers and address the continuing discrimination towards people with disabilities. Our laws must be part of the framework for eradicating exclusion, disadvantage and prejudice.

We need to accept our responsibilities for protecting rights at a time when these are being eroded or threatened by alt-right movements and jingoistic populists.

Victoria, Queensland and the ACT have established a legally binding framework that places human rights at the centre of law and policy decisions; and the Australian Human Rights Commission has released an issues paper *Free and Equal: An Australian*

*conversation on human rights*¹ to start a national conversation across this space. Internationally, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have human rights laws and, although Australia has ratified a number of international conventions and treaties, it is the only western democratic nation without a human rights act or bill of rights.

An attempt by the WA Attorney General to introduce a Human Rights Act more than a decade ago floundered, but there is now a national momentum for change and WA has working examples to use as a how-to manual for our own Charter.

In the best traditions of Australia's Federation, WA can use its earlier work and the experiences of those other leading jurisdictions to shape and implement a Human Rights Charter that builds on those proven initiatives and outcomes.

A WA Human Rights Charter will guide our leaders in parliament and government to make decisions

consistent with our fundamental human rights. This is vitally important for people at the margins of society – but in the end, it is critically important for a state like WA where we are 2.5 million people, from 160 different languages and ethnicities, with more than 50 Indigenous language groups, spread over 2.5 million square kilometres.

A Charter will ensure government is obligated to think, engage and implement their work by taking into account the basic rights of all our people, whoever they are and wherever they live. Policymakers strive to design laws and services that are both efficient and effective, and then typically pause, nearly as an afterthought, to see if the proposal deals with the vulnerable and marginalised. This approach is reasonably good at hitting the centre of the demographic bell-curve, but has been shown again and again to leave out those on the margins. The very practice of policymaking is not neutral and evidence is often subjective: unconscious bias, perceptions and values all play a part as do influential stakeholder groups.

Striving for fairness is at the core of our declared values and a Human Rights Charter will provide a systemic

approach, guided by a legal framework, to deliver on this promise of inclusion.

And if more motive is needed, it is also clear a Human Rights Charter will allow us to learn from our efforts, and to measure and understand our levels of cultural competency, in all its facets, across our wonderful and diverse state. This is a collective skill that will take all of us, together, into a globally connected 21st century.

The WA government has an opportunity to start the conversation about a Human Rights Charter in this term and the combination of the experience of other states and high expectations for a moderate and inclusive Coalition Government in Canberra means the right time to start is now.

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1 www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/projects/free-and-equal-australian-conversation-human-rights#TdXLY

Infrastructure and connectivity for the economy and society



Noel Richards

When the first section of the North West Metro train line in Sydney opened in late May this year, the ABC penned an interesting article which followed a number of new rail commuters, comparing their trips on the new line to their previous journey to work by car.

While a quicker and more efficient trip to work featured heavily in commuters' comments about the new line, many also mentioned the benefits of being able to spend more time with their children and get time back in their lives for themselves. Some also mentioned

their trip was marginally longer by rail but far more comfortable.

These experiences underline the critical role infrastructure and connectivity plays in our communities and in our lives. Economists tend to think about these things more as supporters and enhancers of economic growth – getting people to their jobs more quickly, creating new employment opportunities, or getting freight around a city more efficiently.

Less thinking is given to the social wellbeing that improved infrastructure and connectivity can generate. But these are the issues that move the dial for the average punter, who tends to think less about the economic consequences of infrastructure and more about what it means for their wellbeing.

The truth is that both sides of the equation need consideration when evaluating what infrastructure to invest in and when. But how often are these issues truly given consideration

by government when announcing a shiny new piece of infrastructure?

Many infrastructure funding commitments made before and during the recent Federal election centered on transport and connectivity. Many were billed as 'congestion-busting' but little more rationale was provided to justify the investment.

For the most part, it's likely that investment was committed to those projects because they sat on an asset investment plan of a government agency. So we know it has some degree of planning behind it, but depending on the agency the investment rationale may have more of an engineering bent than an economic or social one. But aside from this, do we know why we should invest in that particular location, and why now?

These are critical questions that we as investors in and consumers of infrastructure need to be asking. All too often, these questions are not answered and investment decisions are left to ministers, premiers and

prime ministers. Granted, this is what we elect them to do, but we trust they are well informed in doing so. The State Government plans to invest almost \$8bn just in roads and rail in WA over the next four years, so a degree of accountability for investment decisions ought to be expected (indeed the Langouant *Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects* said no less).

A key theme of UWA's *Big Issues for WA: Policy Options for Challenges Ahead* is identifying 'things that should be done, how, by whom and by when'. The temptation in answering this question in the context of infrastructure and connectivity is to highlight what things should be built.

My suggestion is something decidedly less sexy: let's get infrastructure planning right, and let's get it right soon.

The State Government is halfway there with the establishment of Infrastructure WA (IWA). But its precise mandate and make-up are still being set. And exactly how it might go about setting a 20-year strategy and prioritising infrastructure is still being thought through.



It would be tragic if IWA became a toothless tiger with infrastructure planning still led by agencies and project selection still largely decided by politicians. It would be worse still if IWA merely served up the 'smorgasbord' of projects from which politicians select.

Ideally, IWA would identify priority and/or problematic corridors, areas and issues for the state which require infrastructure investment, and a rationale for and timing of its urgency. Multidisciplinary teams (ideally reporting to IWA) across the fields of planning, engineering and economics would be drawn from agencies and the private sector to identify potential integrated solutions

to those problems and priorities – infrastructure or otherwise – and work out the economic, social and engineering impacts of a select number of preferred options.

This model is used today, but it is typically post the announcement of a major project.

If we really want to improve infrastructure and connectivity for the economy and society in WA, it has to start with improving the transparency and the quality of the decision-making that underpins what we invest in.

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Schools and future learning



Linda Savage

The world today is on the brink of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It is a revolution characterised by extremely rapid change, the blurring of the real and the technological, and the fusing of the physical, digital and biological. It is the world of big data and artificial intelligence. It is a future that is unpredictable, and already changing how we live in profound ways.

So how best to help prepare children for this future? Education will play a key role.

The World Economic Forum has identified education systems as one of the key action areas for reform to

prepare children for the demands of the rapidly changing world they must navigate.

And it begins with a greater focus on the early years of a child's life. The years before a child enters the formal education system.

This reflects the robust and uncontested evidence that it is the experience in the womb, and in the early years of a child's life, that is fundamental in shaping their capacity for learning, development, health, and social and emotional wellbeing.

The science of early childhood and the benefits for children, the economy and the community from investment in the early years is now well documented.

Over the past decade, state and federal governments have introduced a range of new initiatives informed by that evidence. They include Child and Parent Centres that provide a range of supports for families and their children, including helping children be better prepared when they commence school; the promotion of the importance of early literacy; the provision of free

kindergarten and extended hours of compulsory pre-primary; and enhanced training requirements for those working in childcare services.

Improving the health and wellbeing of children in the early years is one of the state government's 12 priorities, with the specific goal of increasing the number of children who are developmentally on-track on all five Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains by 10 per cent by 2027. Currently one in five children are developmentally vulnerable.

Another recent commitment is the collaboration with the Telethon Kids Institute and the Minderoo Foundation to try, test and deliver evidence-informed, community-led approaches to early childhood services in four WA locations.

For Western Australian children, who must rely on the adults in their lives to get it right for them, these are welcome initiatives.

But this is just the start of the journey to act on the evidence of the causal pathways laid down in the early

years of life. The major implications it has for many areas of policy and services for children, their families and society are still not sufficiently understood by the wider community or translated adequately into action by governments.

In WA, immediate action by government should include:

- Appointing a Minister for Children and initiating a whole of government strategy for Early Childhood.
- Implementing a rigorous and transparent process to ensure all policy, legislative and decision-making processes actively consider and report on the impact it has on children.
- Providing every primary school with an onsite Community Child Health Nurse to enhance children's access to developmental checks from birth to four years.
- Reviewing and modernising legislation to enable the integration of early learning and care with early years education.

Public policy, put simply, is what governments choose to do, or not to do. In making those decisions there is also an ethical dimension – what governments ought to do, or ought not to do. It is hard to imagine what the

role of government is, if not to ensure all children get the best start possible in life, the best chance to grow up to be happy and healthy, and become the responsible and contributing members of society that we need them to be. As a society, it is a goal that everyone should support.

Linda Savage is an Ambassador for Children and Young People in Western Australia.

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The emerging energy economy



Jessica Shaw MLA

Electricity systems – humankind’s largest machines – have traditionally been based on unidirectional energy flows, from centrally dispatched, large-scale power stations, along transmission and distribution lines to passive end consumers. Energy markets and regulatory structures have largely followed the physics. However, significant changes are underway in energy economies around the world – and probably nowhere more so than in Western Australia.

Household-scale solar photovoltaic systems are now the single largest source of generation capacity on WA’s largest electricity networks,

displacing consumption and producing energy at the completely opposite ‘end’ of the system. As the technology improves and costs decrease, demand is also rising for grid and household scale batteries.

These Distributed Energy Resources (DER) are well suited to WA. Deployed effectively, they can lower energy costs for consumers, improve power quality across the system, reduce carbon emissions, and are particularly beneficial at the fringes of the grid. Microgrids and stand-alone power systems, applying DER technologies, are often far more reliable, cost effective and safe than overhead distribution lines.

WA is replete with the raw materials needed for DER manufacturing (such as lithium) and is now developing downstream industries. It has a mature mining industry, proximity to key markets and proven logistical capability. We enjoy abundant renewable energy resources; an IT literate population renowned for its rapid adoption of technology; an entrepreneurial energy sector; an innovative research community;

stable government and publicly-owned utilities demonstrating world-class capabilities to partner and deploy these technologies into a range of challenging operational environments.

The new energy economy offers a range of direct mining, energy and ICT employment opportunities. Insofar as optimised energy systems can reduce electricity costs (and coupled with the state’s rich conventional reserves of natural gas), WA can become an increasingly attractive destination for a range of other industries, delivering local jobs and improving our international competitiveness.

Western Australia also leads the world in microgrid development, producing considerable intellectual property and deployment capability. Our proximity to emerging markets and the increasing demand for rural community electrification in Asia presents a significant potential export market for WA’s DER know-how.

However, there is a range of policy and regulatory challenges facing the energy sector.

Small scale DER are currently neither visible to, nor controllable by, the system operator. This presents a number of growing challenges. While digital technologies offer operators the opportunity to optimise DER (and can also give energy users far greater control), regulators have been reluctant to facilitate them. A more progressive approach is required to encourage the deployment of smart meters and enabling ICT systems, and to inject funding for research and development into system control and optimisation platforms.

Broader market and regulatory changes are also required. Traditional generation and network assets are operating differently to accommodate these new technologies, changing electricity cost structures. The direct installation costs for DER are predominantly borne by individuals; the variable costs of the energy they produce are negligible; and their 'true' system costs are largely hidden, presenting real challenges for traditional markets. Pricing structures and regulatory frameworks do not reflect emerging energy system configurations and asset utilisation patterns, nor the physical dynamics and actual costs of electricity production.



The WA Government is rightly concerned to ensure the supply of affordable, secure, reliable and sustainable electricity across the state and must act swiftly to enable industry to adapt.

WA's physical and regulatory separation from the east coast's energy system insulates it from many consequences arising from the energy and climate policy dysfunction evident in the 'national' energy market. WA's structures can be reformed to send clearer, efficient price signals

that reflect system dynamics and encourage new forms of private sector participation, with the state-owned enterprises performing a vital bridging and ongoing partnering role.

Government, operators, industry and academia need to collaborate to evolve WA's energy systems and markets. New structures should incentivise efficient asset investment and operations, reflect true costs, avoid inefficient cross-subsidies and create a stable investment environment.



Most importantly, however, the changes must be made with the end user firmly in mind – particularly those end users who may not have the immediate capacity to access DER's benefits.

Through the state-owned enterprises, every Western Australian holds a major stake in our energy systems. We have, through our tariffs, invested in these systems for decades. It is legitimate to expect that the entire community benefits as the systems evolve.

Energy is the most basic and necessary of essential services, yet energy poverty is a very real and concerning issue. Many disadvantaged households cannot afford to install DER; many rent their homes; many have neither the time nor capacity to participate in complex or sophisticated energy platforms. Ensuring these people are not left behind, nor forced to cross-subsidise energy choices exercised by others, must be a key policy consideration.

WA's energy transition offers the promise of economic development, carbon mitigation and broad-based societal benefit. The challenges are significant, but not insurmountable. Government, industry and community all stand to gain, but must work together imaginatively to seize the opportunity.

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The need for both pluralism and the first nation's voice



Rabia Siddique

It has been more than two years since the Uluru Statement from the Heart was presented to the then prime minister and no concrete progress has been made towards the constitutional recognition of our Indigenous people.

Juxtapose this with the pride we feel as a nation in being known as one of the most peaceful and successful pluralist societies.

A pluralist society is defined as many cultures, religions and ethnicities co-existing together as part of a bigger singular nation, but with all

communities having a voice and the opportunity for self-determination.

Most pluralist nations are also characterised by their founding document reflecting the true character of their nationhood.

With that in mind, Australia is lacking one important ingredient of pluralism, and it hasn't been the diverse communities that make up our nation that have been responsible for this situation.

Whenever Australians have been asked, they have overwhelmingly supported the idea of Indigenous constitutional recognition. Polling numbers consistently show more than 80 per cent in favour. Many of those people would have voted for the Coalition in the most recent election. Interestingly, similar polling numbers were returned prior to the same sex marriage plebiscite.

So why is it that our Government has not listened to the views of our diverse population who, as a majority, agree on

constitutionally recognising our First Nations people?

Why is it that no progress has been made towards amending our founding document to reflect the true nationhood, the true history of Australia?

Should we continue to be despondent or is there some cause for optimism? Perhaps there is no better time for progress than now.

Next year marks the 250th anniversary of Captain James Cook's arrival on this continent and claiming it for the British Crown. This is a personal passion project for Prime Minister Morrison, who has already earmarked nearly \$50 million to mark the occasion including a replica of the Endeavour circumnavigating Australia and a new monument at Botany Bay.

Of course many Indigenous people feel the weight of 1770, and the dispossession and colonisation that began with it. But 2020 is an opportunity to begin to tell a new

story of this country for a new century. 2020 is a chance to merge two great traditions, the old and the new: the Indigenous and the European, as well as to recognise the true diversity that makes our country unique.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar said herself: “Despite the recent setbacks and the rejections, I still hold a deep sense of hope, because I genuinely believe that this gift will benefit all Australians. And I believe that Australians are looking for a way to move forward together”.

Consider the words of the Uluru Statement itself: that it “can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood”, and that it seeks “constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country”. It is hard to deny that the Uluru Statement promises a brighter future for Indigenous children who will “walk in two worlds” and whose culture will “be a gift to their country”.

The Uluru Statement kept faith with the Australian people’s most resoundingly successful referendum in 1967 when Indigenous people were finally counted. Now, it says, “we seek

to be heard”. This has never been about dividing people but, in the closing words of the statement, extending an invitation “to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future”.

Isn’t this exactly what pluralism should be about?

Stan Grant summarised it so well when he said “In the Uluru Statement the quiet voices ask other Australians to join their voices with them. Prime Minister Morrison pledged his election victory to the ‘Quiet Australians’. He has the chance now to give a voice to the quietest Australians.”

It’s now up to all Australians to hold politicians and our Government to account and back the Uluru Statement. If we, the diverse people of this country, make our voices heard, government will no longer be able to deny the voice of the First Nations. And if the newly appointed Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt has anything to do with it, we may just be able to achieve that within the next three years.

Then we can truly call ourselves a pluralist nation and one where all voices are heard and recognised.

Rabia Siddique is an international humanitarian lawyer, a leading inspirational speaker, transformational leadership coach and mentor, facilitator, author, thought leader and educator.

Investing for the future: Australian agriculture



Professor Kadambot Siddique

Australia ranks fourth in the world behind Brazil, Argentina and the Netherlands as a net exporter of agricultural products.

Australia typically exports 60 to 70 per cent of its agricultural products, hence helping meet the food requirements of Australia's 25 million people, plus another 60 million overseas. This makes Australia one of the most food secure nations on earth. In addition to this, a conservative estimate suggests that Australia helps feed between 400 and 500 million people in developing countries as a result of leading or participating in agricultural education,

training, development, knowledge and technology transfer in partnership with developing countries and International Agricultural Research Centres (IARC).

We must remember that the world's population just surpassed 7.5 billion and is on track to add yet another billion in the next 12 years. Modern society can't thrive without access to a high level of quality food, produced sustainably and economically, and the challenge is to find solutions to declining natural resources (e.g. land, water and nutrients) and inclining human population.

Using a wide range of indicators, including water, fertiliser and energy use efficiency and rate of adoption of technologies such as conservation agriculture (e.g. zero tillage, precision agriculture), Australian agriculture leads the world. Continued long-term improvements in world food production are fundamental to world security. *Feeding the growing population will require renewed and vigorous efforts to enhance agricultural productivity, utilising all the advantages modern science and technology bring.*

The productivity growth in Australian agriculture has slowed during recent years. However, international competitors have been making rapid advancements. With the reduction in cost of production and improvements in supply chain efficiencies, competitors such as the Black Sea countries may erode Australia's market share in key international markets. The Australian agriculture industry cannot be complacent – standing still is not an option in rapidly evolving and competitive international markets. *As global demand increases, there are emerging opportunities for Australia to capitalise on.* However, these opportunities require a concerted and collaborative effort by an effectively coordinated industry.

A general challenge the Australian agricultural sector faces is to develop the production systems we need to supply. The potentially significant increase in demand in new markets require this in order to avoid damaging the landscape and increasing substantially our environmental footprint. We have a challenging environment and fragile landscapes, but an innovative agricultural sector.

Australia has particular expertise and knowledge. The past 50 years have seen tremendous advances in dryland food production systems and, in this field, we are on the frontier of global practice. This is entirely the result of decades of diligent research and development, and honing the mechanisms to share findings and see them translated to our farms and the industry.

Two-and-a-half billion people globally now depend on dryland farming for food and livelihood. Drylands cover more than 40 per cent of the world's land area and are home to one-third of the world's population. The effects of climate change will lead to even more water scarcity and declining crop yields, leaving the people of these regions acutely vulnerable in the absence of appropriate risk management strategies. *The inherent complexity of the drylands requires an integrated systems approach.* The immense diversity and magnitude of the issues and challenges call for a strategic approach with realistic prioritisation for steady impact. Improved adaptation and resilience in agricultural production and food supply are a high priority.

Nations that have the technology have a special responsibility to increase the research capacity of nations in the region and beyond. Sharing practice and knowledge requires strong long-term links and cooperation.

The new digital technologies now available promise a new era of agricultural science and research. The application of these technologies – drones, sensing equipment, data collection techniques – offer the means of achieving even better outcomes. *New areas and methods of agricultural research – crop simulation models, smart genetics, ecosystem management and the improvement of farm-level decision-making through digital support – are the new frontier.*

Western Australia has recently set a plan to double agricultural production in the state by 2030. Our next ambition should be to work with agricultural scientists the world over to see an increase of the same magnitude across the dryland farms of the world.

In conclusion, the main challenges WA should focus on are two-fold:

- An increasingly variable climate will require close monitoring, innovative research, development and adaptation of predominantly

dryland farming systems in Australia.

- Versatility in our systems to manage risks associated with markets and climate. We need systems that enable producers to cope with 'poor' seasons and capitalise on 'good' ones, which will depend on scientific innovation as well as innovation in business and the partnerships across the industry supply chain and end-markets.

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Big issues for WA: China and India



Stephen Smith

The post-May 2019 Federal Election policy challenge for Western Australia with respect to the state's engagement with China and India is the same as it was post the March 2017 Western Australian State Election.

The Western Australian Government came to office having correctly identified that the state's economy had to be diversified beyond minerals and petroleum resources exports to north Asia and that this diversification project needed to apply both to the exports themselves and to their destinations.

This need has increased since early 2017.

Relevant factors include the United States' policy uncertainty, significantly greater regional and global assertiveness on the part of Xi Jinping's China, and a relative softening of global economic circumstances.

Recently, we have seen a very clear hardening of the strategic competition between the US and China. On the economic front, this has evidenced itself with an emerging 'Trade War' between these top two global economies, Australia's top two economic partners.

This mutual hardening of positions was evident most recently at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, the Indo Pacific's premier strategic setting for our region's senior Defence and National Security officials.

Singapore's PM Lee Hsien Loong diplomatically laid out the dangers of the two superpowers not getting their bilateral relationship right, to then see the two countries' respective Defence Ministers bluntly harden their positions in front of many of the region's key security players.

These tensions run the risk of miscalculation, but also substantial adverse economic consequences for Australia, our region and the globe. Or as a pessimist might put it, the risk of a "cold war with economic characteristics".

Putting all or most of our eggs in any one country's economic basket is not good risk management at the best of times, and certainly not in this environment.

In 2018, WA accounted for nearly 60 per cent of Australia's total merchandise exports to China. And this from a state vastly more dependent on trade for its economic growth than Australia as a whole, and therefore more exposed to fluctuations in Chinese demand.

At the same time, in a deeply significant structural shift, the centre of global economic gravity is shifting, coming closer to WA. This is driven most particularly by the rise of India as a great power and a great economy, but also by the rise of Indonesia as a global influence, not just a regional one.

By the midpoint of this century, India and Indonesia will join China and the US as the world's top four economies, with India on track to be the second largest, and Indonesia the fourth.

With India on a trajectory to great economy and great power status, Australia must develop a first-class trade and investment relationship with the world's largest democracy. Having such a relationship with just two out of the top four economies, China and the US, will not be enough to maintain our prosperity.

We have to find additional destinations for our goods and services and, more importantly, entice additional sources of foreign investment. To do this with India requires the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive strategy, such as outlined in the Varghese India Economic Strategy.

And we start from a low base – Western Australia underperforms in trade with India compared to Australia as a whole, and in particular underperforms in services trade, a key area Varghese identified.

In enhancing Indian engagement, Perth and WA have proximity and time zone advantages over other Australian

states. We need to make use of those advantages.

While in June the Reserve Bank of Australia identified India as a significant potential destination for mineral resources exports, it is already clear that WA in the first instance will not be able to rely upon such exports to grow our trade and investment with India. We have to move to other areas where we have world-class capability and strength.

So there are three things WA can do now to help capture a share of India's economy:

- As part of its Review of WA International Trade Offices, resolve to resource these offices for their future potential, not for their past or outdated economic contribution. Invest for the future economy, not the past.
- Engage with Indian Ambassador, Anil Wadhwa, who is conducting the Indian Economic Study on the Australian economy, and highlight some of WA's strengths in areas he has already said are on his radar, including education, research and innovation, and critical and battery-quality minerals.

Energise the WA–Andhra Pradesh Sister State relationship by reaching out to newly elected Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy with an early visit.

Professor Stephen Smith served as the former Minister for Defence and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and is currently the Chair of the UWA Public Policy Institute.

Arts and culture



Ted Snell

In 2015, the World Economic Forum identified creativity as an essential skill for the fourth industrial revolution. In *The Future of Jobs*, they outlined a lifelong approach to learning that encourages complex problem-solving, critical thinking and cognitive flexibility as a counterpoint to the one-dimensional professional focus of the past.

We learn by doing, we learn kinaesthetically, we learn by repetition, and we remember when we combine our senses and focus all our abilities on a specific problem. If Western Australia is to compete in the global marketplace where the economy of the cultural

industries is growing in importance and visual expression is part of everyday communication, then visual acuity and the ability to learn and to communicate through the arts must be recognised as an equally fundamental skill set to those of language and numeracy.

Currently, the arts are peripheral within our education system across all sectors. A strategy for the integration of the arts into the primary and secondary curriculum is a priority for the Education Department and the broader arts community.

An informed and creative workforce is essential for our future development. If WA expects to fulfil its potential and work with the major emerging economies in a time zone we share with 60 per cent of the world's population, then it must present itself as a vibrant, connected, welcoming, inclusive, culturally rich and diverse community.

The ingredients of that success are here in abundance, but it will require strategic planning and resourcing to make it a reality. It is time to address the extremely meagre investment in cultural infrastructure and support.

Currently, the allocation to the arts is only 0.65 per cent of the state's total budget.

Although blessed with extraordinary creative talent across all sectors of the arts, we have inadequate cultural infrastructure. Many of our existing facilities are poorly maintained and are no longer fit for purpose. Fortunately, the State Theatre Centre and the new WA Museum are outstanding exceptions; however, there is no Recital Hall, Lyric Theatre or Aboriginal Cultures museum to showcase the extraordinary 50,000 years of continuous cultural life of this place.

Investment in cultural infrastructure is essential if we are to enable the artists and performers living here to reach their full potential. A thoroughly researched plan on the provision of crucial cultural infrastructure is now an urgent project for government and agencies like the Chamber of the Arts and Culture.

The numerous arts organisations represented by the Chamber across all disciplines within the arts need adequate resourcing to be sustainable.



The Committee for Perth published its *Cultural Compact* in 2007 to enhance Perth's cultural fabric as a key strategy in improving the liveability of the city. That document and the 2016 Strategic Plan prepared by the Department of Culture and the Arts need revision – to ensure a solid foundation and ongoing viability of the agencies that provide artistic and cultural vivacity and guarantee a dynamic future in an environment that will attract and sustain a 21st century community.

The gender diversity and varied cultural heritage introduced by waves of migration of WA are not adequately reflected in the record of performances, the works held in our collections and the experience of local and visiting audiences. An audit to show the diversity of our culture and to ensure its adequate presentation for posterity requires research and the development of a program of commissioning and acquisition that will redress this imbalance.

Western Australia needs a vital and sustainable arts community supported by the government and with private sector commitment and investment. This is the leaven that will ensure our cultural dough rises, and with it, we will see the state re-energised into a vibrant, globally relevant community.

Professor Ted Snell AM, CitWA is the Chief Cultural Officer and Director of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

The future economy



Deidre Willmott

Western Australia needs more people. After the huge changes we have seen, it is time to reshape our economy and truly diversify.

Record investment in mining and resources has seen our annual Gross State Product (GSP) increase from just under \$90b in 2004 to \$259b in 2018. In that same period, our population grew from just under two million to a forecast 2.72 million by the end of June 2019.

Asian economies are growing and will continue to do so. According to Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, by 2035 four of the world's five

biggest economies are likely to be China, India, Japan and Indonesia.

Perth sits right at the centre of this powerhouse zone and is now firmly established as Australia's Indian Ocean capital.

But there is more to be done. The economic slowdown experienced from 2013 showed how exposed our economy is to the cyclical nature of commodities markets. This is now even more likely to be the case. Mining and resources now make up around 30 per cent of our GSP up from just below 20 per cent in 2004. This compares with 6.9 per cent in the national economy. While services make up 61 per cent of the national economy, in WA they account for only 42 per cent of the state economy.

Our political leaders all say we need to diversify the economy. The question is how? Here are some suggestions.

Growing any industry requires a skilled workforce. Lifting the education and training outcomes of our people is very important but WA needs a game-changer and this needs to be using our

comparative advantages to attract skilled and talented people from other places to live and work here.

Our world-leading universities provide an important pathway. The State Government has set a target of doubling the number of overseas students to 100,000 by 2025 and has introduced the Graduate Skilled Migration List as an incentive for international students to study in WA. This corrects an earlier policy and should be actively promoted to encourage graduates to remain in WA.

We should have more scholarships for outstanding overseas students. Andrew and Nicola Forrest have led the way establishing the Forrest Scholarships for PhD students to come from around the world to WA to complete their studies.

As the economy continues to improve, the WA Skilled Migration Occupation List requires urgent review in consultation with industry. Skilled workers employed in Western Australia should be welcomed and fast-tracked for permanent residency and citizenship. Much of our population

growth from 2004 onwards came from people who moved here for work and decided to stay. We should make sure this pathway is open or we risk missing this opportunity to grow and diversify.

Just having more people in the state will increase economic activity and growth. The government should be careful to avoid picking winners by trying to direct people into specific industries. Given the rapid changes we are seeing, this is best left to employers, including the universities themselves.

One industry government that has been focused on growing has been tourism and hospitality, which leads to another issue. We need to be far more welcoming of tourists from our region. The State Government has been working on an Asian Engagement Strategy for the state, but how can we engage with people in other countries when we cannot welcome them to our state as visitors?

Passport holders from some countries in our region can visit Australia with an Electronic Travel Authority which costs \$20 and is generally processed within one day. But citizens of other countries, including Indonesia and India, must apply for a Visitor Visa costing \$140 per person and taking up

to a month to process. What does this say to members of the rapidly growing middle classes in the Indo-Pacific region? It is proving to be a real barrier to tourism growth right at a time when the numbers of tourists are growing by the day. Reforming the visas could open the way for direct flights to the Kimberley and investment in tourism infrastructure and jobs in the north of the state.

In conclusion, the Western Australian economy is even more exposed than ever to the cyclical resources industry. Hopes of diversifying the economy will only be realised when we increase the number of skilled workers in our economy and encourage visitors from all Indo-Pacific countries. Some ideas for immediate implementation include:

- The State Government and universities should actively promote opportunities for graduates to stay in WA.
- The State Government and universities should fundraise to provide more scholarships for outstanding overseas students.
- The State Government should review the WA Skilled Migration Occupation List in consultation with industry.
- The Federal Government should reform tourist visas for passport

holders from Indo-Pacific countries including Indonesia and India.

Deidre Willmott is a Non Executive Director of Australia Post and the Perth USAsia Centre.

Connecting Western Australia and Indonesia through stories



Caroline Wood

Storytelling is a universal art shared across the world. The Centre for Stories uses storytelling to inspire social cohesion, to improve understanding between people, and to connect with diverse communities. Through telling stories, we discover more about each other and create possibilities for art, trade and diplomacy. From Perth, that includes our nearest international neighbours in Indonesia. Engaging with Indonesia through storytelling and other arts can lead to improved cultural relations and a better balance of trade.

There are examples where this has been successful, but the public and private sector can do more to improve our relationship with Indonesia. This includes sharing stories with each other towards a common goal. To cite a few recent moments in the arts:

- The recent appointment of Perth Festival Director Iain Grandage offers a real opportunity to further develop creative links. Grandage collaborated with highly acclaimed Indonesian filmmaker Garin Nugroho on the silent black and white film *Setan Jawa (Java's Devil)*.
- *A Man, A Monster and The Sea*, an ecologically themed installation knitted by Indonesian installation artist Mulyana has been the most popular exhibition at FORM Gallery in Claremont in 2019.
- This year Giramondo Publishing has released *Sergius Seeks Bacchus* by Indonesian poet Norman Erikson Pasaribu and this has influenced the national literary discourse.

These are good examples of engagement between the creative industries in Australia and Indonesia,

across festivals, galleries and publishers. Moving forward, I would like to see structural change that allows these kinds of possibilities to blossom. That means funding support, political leadership, business collaboration, community will and artistic innovation.

A concerted effort at a public policy level is required to support and stimulate meaningful cultural engagement between Australia and Indonesia through telling stories and beyond. As a foundation, Indonesian language needs to be taught and promoted more widely in secondary schools. Western Australian youth need to see how Indonesian language proficiency and cultural literacy can play an integral part in careers such as business, tourism, education and the arts. Additionally, Indonesian stories, both contemporary and historical, need to be represented in curricula to spark interest in – and improve our understanding of – our region.

Formal exchange agreements between literary festivals such as Ubud Readers & Writers Festival, Makassar



International Writers' Festival, Broome's Corrugated Lines, Margaret River Readers & Writers Festival, and the Perth Festival would increase the collaboration between both places. This would be supported by funding for relationships between arts bodies such as Ruang MES 56 and Rumata ArtSpace in Indonesia and similar organisations in Perth such as The Blue Room Theatre and local publishers. Sustained and meaningful engagement leading to a closer relationship points positive

implications for trade and diplomacy in general.

Prioritising Indonesia should be part of a broader reconsideration about our place and role in the region, and the relationships, which matter to us. We need a long-term, multi-generational policy with concrete outcomes and financial support to ensure we are optimally placed.

Engaging with Indonesia will allow Perth to tell a story about its identity

that is true to our geography. This means looking at our history and place in the world with a sense of deep-rooted confidence to articulate why we matter to each other and our neighbours. It will allow us to tell the best stories yet about who we are and what we might yet become when we work together for a shared future.

Caroline Wood is the Founder and Director of the Centre for Stories.

Raising the bar on Indigenous Affairs policy in WA



Peter Yu

For Indigenous Australians, the 2019 Federal Election result challenged us to think strategically about how best to engage with all sides of politics in advocating for a whole of Parliament approach in dealing with the unresolved grievances of First Nations communities.

Since the election, the need to take a bi-partisan approach to Indigenous Australians has been gaining credence in Canberra.

On July 10, Minister Ken Wyatt gave an address at the National Press Club in which he committed the government to a process aimed at garnering a

consensus around the best form of constitutional recognition – and a voice to Parliament – during the current parliamentary term. He urged caution, and a measured approach, as the nation moves through the necessary conversations in the lead-up to the referendum.

In my view, the timing is right for the nation to begin this journey. Polling conducted two weeks prior to the election indicated that the propositions contained within the Uluru statement enjoyed greater support across the Australian community than the same-sex marriage vote. The Australian electorate then is clearly ready.

Earlier this year, Rio Tinto and BHP threw their weight behind the Uluru statement. They were the first corporate entities to signify support, but followed in the footsteps of Australian Medical Association and the Law Council of Australia. These entities represent fundamentally conservative corporate and professional institutions. So corporate Australia is also ready.

The Western Australian government should be emboldened by the support

Minister Ken Wyatt’s vision is garnering nationally – and it should be prepared to negotiate this vision and position with the Morrison government. Critically this can only happen via a bi-partisan mechanism which would apply this vision in a pragmatic way, and provide certainty as to its ongoing support.

The moral and ethical imperatives embodied by this vision are now firmly undergirded by the Australian High Court decision taken in Timber Creek in March of this year, which established further clarity for the right to compensation for Native Title holders for the loss of previously undefined native title rights.

This decision should provide significant impetus for both State and Commonwealth governments to seriously consider how treaties might be progressed. It is not in the nation’s interest, nor in the interests of Indigenous people, for there to be ongoing uncertainty as to whose responsibility it is, and it is incumbent on the Commonwealth government, via COAG, to lead and support the states and territories of Australia to progress the agenda of treaties.

There is a number of critical policy reform agendas for the current WA government to address in the ongoing uncertainty of its relationship with the state's First Nations Peoples.

The first, by co-design, will be to reform the representation and mandate of First Nations Peoples in their engagement with the state's constitutional and political framework. This can occur by emulating Federal Labor's pre-election commitment to the establishment of regional assemblies across the state, enabling more effective, robust engagement of Indigenous people in policy settings, and greater efficiency and investment returns under the 'Closing the Gaps' initiatives.

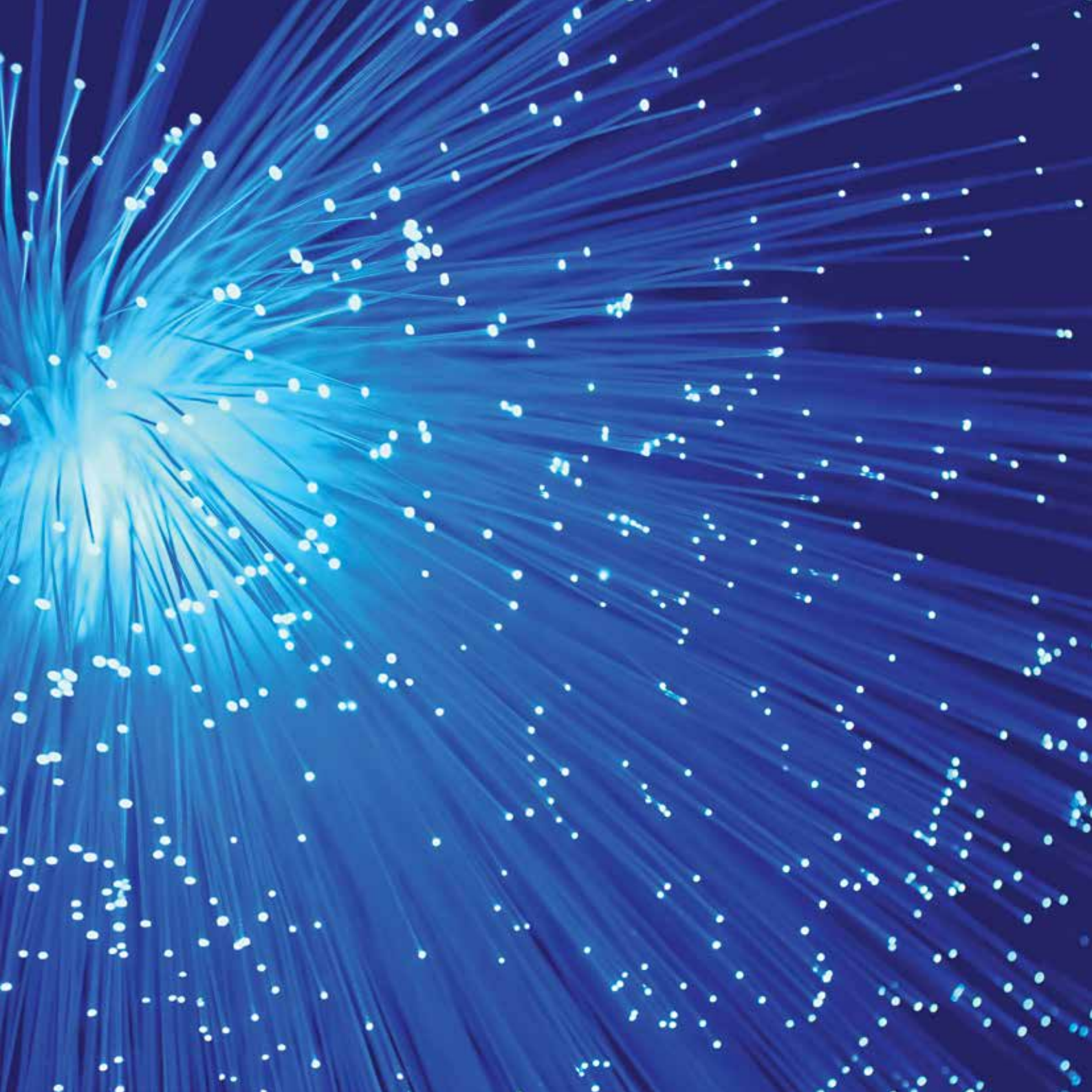
These assemblies will also prove a crucial mechanism and reference point for State and Federal government in the developing conversations around agreement making in the move toward constitutional reform and formal relationship with First Nation communities.

The devolution of decision-making power to the regions and improved governance would enable greater accountability and could facilitate more functional partnerships between

governments, industry and Indigenous groups to progress economic development priorities.

The second Indigenous policy reform for the WA government to prioritise is the establishment of an independent Truth Telling Commission for the purposes of hearing and recording the stories of the state's First Nations peoples and the wider community of Western Australia. The proper acknowledgement of these histories is foundational to addressing intergenerational trauma currently devastating First Nation communities, and will prove crucial to the process of Reconciliation.

Peter Yu is the CEO of Nyamba Buru Yawuru, a not-for-profit company owned by the Yawuru native title holders of Broome.





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